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ABSTRACT

A representative sample of 37 incoming Asian-American freshmen at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP), reported their attitudes and perceptions on a number of personal and social issues. Forty-one percent attended UMCP because of its geographic location, and more than half came to learn skills directly applicable to a career. Thirty-two percent intended to obtain a master's degree, 22 percent a medical degree, and 8 percent doctoral degree. Thirty percent had an A or A plus average in high school, while another 35 percent had a B plus average. Of the sample, 46 percent planned to commute from 6 to 50 miles each way; 43 percent intended to live in a residence hall. Thirty-two percent needed to work to stay in school, and 22 percent needed to earn more than $75.00 per week. The students' main source of information about UMCP came from visits to the campus (41 percent) and university publications (30 percent). It was found that Asian-American freshmen were most interested in improving their writing, reading, and spelling skills. Sample survey questions are appended. (Author/LB)

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A PROFILE OF ASIAN-AMERICAN UNIVERSITY FRESHMEN

Lydia Y. Minatoya and William E. Sedlacek

Research Report # 9-80

Summary

A representative sample of 37 incoming Asian-American freshmen reported their attitudes and perceptions on a number of personal and social issues. Forty-one percent attended the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) because of its geographical location, and more than half came to learn skills directly applicable to a career. Thirty-two percent intended to obtain a Master's degree, 22% a medical degree, and 8% another doctoral degree. Thirty percent had an A or A+ average in high school, while another 35% had a B+ average.

Forty-six percent planned to commute from 6 - 50 miles each way, while 43% intended to live in a residence hall. Thirty-two percent needed to work to stay in school, with 22% needing to earn more than $75.00 per week. Their main source of information about UMCP came from visits to the campus (41%) and University publications (30%). Asian-American freshmen were most interested in improving their writing, reading and spelling skills while at UMCP. Many additional responses are reported and discussed.

A total of 138 Asian-American freshmen entered the University of Maryland, College Park, (UMCP) in the Fall of 1979[1]. As part of a two day summer orientation program, the University New Student Census was administered by the Counseling Center to a representative sample of 37 incoming Asian-American freshmen. The sample was 54% male and 46% female. This report is a descriptive summary of that survey.

Academic Background and Expectations

The most frequent reason cited by this sample for attending UMCP was its geographic location (41%). Other reasons cited were that it is relatively inexpensive (22%) and the quality of a particular academic program (13%). Over half (53%) of the students felt that their most important current educational objective was to learn skills directly applicable to their career goals. Deciding upon a career goal (17%) and becoming independent in thought and behavior (11%) were also cited as most important educational objectives by the students.

Professional aspirations appeared to be quite high for the Asian-American freshmen. Twenty-two percent intended to obtain a medical degree, eight percent wanted to obtain another doctoral degree, and 32% intended to obtain a Master's degree. Minatoya and Sedlacek (1979) suggested that Asian-American students were unlikely to pursue careers requiring conspicuousness and assertiveness. These are attributes commonly associated with the occupation of lawyer. None of the Asian-American students surveyed intended to pursue a law degree.

The average high school grades of the incoming Asian-American freshmen were high, 30% of the students had an average grade in high school of A or A+, with an additional 35% reporting an average of B+. The academic areas in which the

[1]Data taken from Data Research Center Newsletter, University of Maryland, College Park, November 1979.

students seemed to feel they were the weakest were writing (31%), science courses (17%), taking exams, (14%) and study habits (11%).

Table 1 shows the average hours per week these students studied while they were in high school. Many of them spent a large proportion of their time in study: 19% reported spending from 18 to 30 hours per week studying, 28% said they spent from 9 to 17 hours a week studying and 36% reported they studied from 4 to 8 hours each week.

Leaving the University before obtaining a degree was inconceivable to 11% of the students. Reasons why leaving might occur included cost (14%), to accept a good job (14%) and lack of scholastic ability (11%). The most compelling reasons for remaining to graduate centered on career aspirations. Nineteen percent of the students felt the major reason to complete their degree requirements was that a degree was requisite for their chosen profession, 19% specified that the degree was needed to enter professional or graduate school, and 14% felt that college graduates get better jobs. When asked what was most important in their long term career choice, 23% of the Asian-American students mentioned that job openings were usually available in their chosen career, 20% sought to be members of a well respected occupation, and another 17% said high anticipated earning were the primary reason for their career choice.

Housing and Financial Information

Forty six percent of the freshmen planned to commute 6-50 miles each way from their parents or guardians' house and 43% intended to live in a University residence hall. Over half had spent most of their lives in a suburb, and 22% had lived most of their lives in a city.

Table 2 shows responses to the question "If your staying in school this year is dependent upon your working part time, how much money do you need to earn?" Thirty two percent responded that they needed to work to stay in school, with

22% needing to earn more than $75 per week. Five percent planned to work in federally funded work study programs, 16% on other campus jobs, and 35% planned to work off campus. Over half of the Asian-American freshmen began their freshman year with previous work experience. Twenty five percent earned between $1,000 - 3,000 in the previous year. Work appears to be highly valued by the 27% of the Asian-American students who felt their job experience was the most important contribution to their personal development during the past year. Another 27% felt that social life (dating, parties etc.) was the most important factor in their personal development during the past year.

View of the University of Maryland

Their main source of information about the University of Maryland, College Park, came from visits to the campus (41%) and University publications (30%). Parents (33%) and other family members (17%) were most influential in their decisions to attend the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP). For more than half of the Asian-Americans, UMCP was the first choice of colleges. For 95% of the students, UMCP was among the first three choices of colleges. Over two-thirds of the Asian-American students came from high schools where more than half the students went on to college, and approximately 80% of the Asian-American freshmen came from moderate sized schools where the graduating class was between 300 - 700.

View of self

Twenty-nine percent of the students would like to improve their public speaking abilities, 26% to improve their social skills, and 20% to become more assertive. When attitudinal items were analyzed by sex, the only significant difference which emerged was that women ranked social and extracurricular learning as more important to their philosophy of learning than did men.

As can be seen in Table 3, Asian-American freshmen expressed the strongest agreement with the statements pertaining to higher education as a means for personal and social improvement. The five statements which elicited the strongest agreement dealt with wanting to improve their writing, reading, and spelling skills, and the statement that the University should use its influence to improve social conditions in the state. Also displayed in Table 3, are the statements which elicited the strongest disagreement. These were: "I do not understand human sexuality well; I usually fail to complete homework assignments on time; getting a good grade in a course is more important to me than the content of the course; and I expect to find a parking space if I drive on campus."

Over half of the students felt that their personal or religious philosophy was adequate, 11% felt it was inadequate, and 30% were not certain. Seventeen percent had been raised as Protestants, 17% as Catholics, and none as Jews. Twenty-three percent had been raised with other religious affiliation and 39% had had no religious affiliation during their rearing. Over half of the students currently felt they had no religious affiliation. The students described their present political orientation as middle of the road (35%), liberal (22%), conservative (16%), and completely apolitical (11%).

REFERENCE

Minatoya, L.Y. and Sedlacek, W.E., Another look at the melting pot: Asian-American undergraduates at the University of Maryland, College Park, Journal of College Student Personnel, 1980 (in press).

TABLE 1

Average Study Hours Per Week in High School

Item 25:

In High School you studied, on the average, how many hours per week?

Response:	Percent:
None	6
1 - 3 hours per week	11
4 - 5 " "	25
6 - 8 " "	11
9 -12 " "	25
13 -17 " "	3
18 -21 " "	8
22 -26 " "	3
27 -30 " "	8
	100%

TABLE 2

Staying in School Dependent on Part-Time Work

Is your staying in school this year dependent upon your working part-time?

Response:	Percent:
Yes	32%
No	68%
	100%

Item 13:

If yes, how much money would you need to earn?

Response:	Percent:
Don't need job to stay in school	39
10 or less per week	0
11 - 19 " "	0
20 - 29 " "	6
30 - 39 " "	11
40 - 49 " "	17
50 - 75 " "	6
More than $75 per week	22
	100%

TABLE 3

Means & Standard Deviations of Attitudinal Items*	Means	S.D.
1. I expect to participate in some form of intramural athletics at the University.	2.41	0.93
2. The University should actively recruit black students.	3.03	0.60
3. I would like to design my own major rather than select one already established.	3.00	1.00
4. I know how to use a library well.	2.54	1.04
5. UMCP has a good academic reputation.	2.46	0.77
6. I am interested in improving my reading skills.	1.73	0.77
7. I do not understand human sexuality well.	3.33	0.87
8. I expect that my class assignments will be fully explained to me.	2.54	1.10
9. I think channels for expressing student complaints will be readily available.	2.57	0.90
10. I am interested in counseling regarding educational-vocational plans.	2.62	0.95
11. I expect that, for the most part, my courses will be stimulating and exciting.	2.46	0.96
12. I usually fail to complete homework assignments on time.	3.14	1.18
13. It is difficult for me to write papers.	3.08	1.19
14. I generally do my homework at the same time each day.	2.81	0.97
15. I would like to improve my spelling skills.	2.27	1.02
16. I seriously thought about not going to college.	3.08	1.42
17. I feel most instructors will act like they care about students.	3.08	1.16
18. Getting a good grade in a course is more important to me than the content of the course.	3.14	1.08
19. UMCP is considered a party school.	2.89	1.05
20. I am interested in seeking counseling regarding emotional/social concerns.	2.76	1.06

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Means & Standard Deviations of Attitudinal Items*	Means	S.D.
21. UMCP is known mostly for its athletic teams.	2.76	0.86
22. I would prefer to commute rather than live on campus.	2.89	1.15
23. I am interested in improving my writing skills.	2.05	1.08
24. The University should use its influence to improve social conditions in the State.	2.24	0.83
25. I closely follow one or more UMCP athletic teams.	2.51	1.19
26. Financial assistance should be given more often based on merit instead of need.	2.78	1.06
27. Chances are good that I will at some time drop out temporarily before I complete a bachelor's degree.	3.00	1.31
28. I expect to be able to find a parking space if I drive on campus.	3.11	1.28